

# Is Mission Study Worth While?

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# IS MISSION STUDY WORTH WHILE?

## I. CONSIDERATIONS WHICH APPEAL TO THE STUDENT AS A STUDENT.

The interests and outlook of the average student are not world-wide. The conditions of a college life and the limitations of a college curriculum are necessarily such that his mind is not occupied with the conditions surrounding remote nations of the earth and the great currents of life that move among them. He thinks in terms of his fraternity, of his team, of his class, of his college work and of the immediate problems of his own life. Why should he not? Why should he not think entirely in the student world where he lives and moves and has his being? Why should he give any special concern or investigation to great world movements outside, even though they are stirring some mighty and time-honored civilizations at their depths? Why should he study the scope, the problems and the history of the missionary enterprise? The answer is that he has very much to gain from such a study. If he hap-

pens to have a sympathetic interest in those about whom he studies it will add relish to his investigation. But in any case mission study has a claim on the attention of every earnest and ambitious student.

1. A consideration of the problems of non-Christian countries brings him breadth of outlook.

He has already learned much regarding the conditions in his own country and probably those in other Christian lands. When he adds to this a knowledge of the non-Christian countries, he has pushed back his horizon until it embraces the whole world. He is henceforth able to consider any part of the world with the clearness and fairness of a well-stored mind. He thinks in continents. He reads his newspaper intelligently. He ponders and discusses the world's problems with accuracy and a sense of proportion. He views the affairs of nations with an improved perspective. He gains new light on the conditions and movements in his own country. Out of a new understanding of national habits and ideals he interprets aright the conditions of individual races, while realizing more clearly the essential unity of

the human family. He becomes a true patriot by learning to be a citizen of the world.

2. In many cases this adds practical equipment for his life career.

It is not difficult to see for example that a man has added to his stock-in-trade for the pursuit of the legal and medical professions, when he has studied the conditions of the non-Christian nations and the measures that have been taken for the relief of these conditions, whether by the improvement of their physical state and surroundings or by the abolition of practices that were debasing, superstitious and cruel.

The journalist, too, is dependent for success, among other things, upon a knowledge of the conditions of the people and the national tendencies and ideals, not only of his own country, but of other countries as well.

Not a few students are looking forward more or less sanguinely toward politics, diplomacy or the consular service as a life work. A study of the life of the immigrant, of the poor in the great cities, of the western pioneer, of the negro and the Indian, in his own land, and also of the great world-currents outside, of the ways of living and



thinking of remote nations of the earth, will enter very materially into the preparation for such careers.

A life in the world of finance and trade would receive a similarly useful contribution from such a study, since every mission field is a foreign market.

3. The study embraces events and facts that the thorough student must desire to know.

It is axiomatic that the well-furnished student must have a substantial knowledge of history. Unless he knows what his own and other countries have been doing through the centuries, he cannot stand as a broadly cultured man. And this knowledge logically should be most thorough regarding the most important events and tendencies of history. For example, if it is of importance that the student should know the general course of the Hundred Years' War, it is of much greater importance that he should know of the Nineteen Hundred Years' War of Christ in the world—the war for liberty, enlightenment, justice, truth, peace and unselfish brotherly love. And this age-long campaign is inextricably linked with the history of missionary effort. Every Christian civilization in the world is the direct

product of the missionary enterprise and its true genius cannot be fully understood apart from the study of that enterprise. A study of missionary history and principles and methods discloses great motive forces that have controlled the currents of the life of nations and makes intelligible some of the mightiest movements in the history of the race.

4. The study of missions bears more or less directly on many other branches of study.

The bearing of mission study upon the study of history has just been pointed out. Not less intimate is its connection with several other departments of learning. The student of sociology cannot proceed very far without calling in the results of the study of missions. Anthropology and ethnology are vitally connected with it. Ethics and philosophy of necessity require a study of non-Christian races and religions. The study of jurisprudence and international law is greatly illuminated by an investigation of the legal codes and the manner of life of mission lands. Medicine and science not only have received incalculable contributions from the missionary, but they

must concern themselves with the phenomena and facts of the unenlightened nations. Geography is a science created largely by missions and touched at many points by the study of missions. Philology would be a sadly deficient science without the one hundred and fifty dictionaries and the scholarly investigations which missions have given it. The study of literature is greatly enriched by a study of the languages and writings of mission countries. Indeed, it is difficult to name branches of learning which are not linked in some measure with the study of missions in its broader aspects.

An admirable statement of the relation of the study of missions to the study of other subjects will be found in Dr. Barton's pamphlet, "What is involved in Mission Study?"

## II. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH APPEAL TO THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT.

The *Christian* student must take into account not only the advantages that come to him as a student from the study of missions, but also those special considerations which oblige him as a Christian to engage in this study.



1. He is bound as a disciple to be concerned about his Master's affairs.

A Christian needs no argument to prove that Christ is deeply interested in the world's redemption. It was for this He came into the world and for this He died. All His utterances about His errand here are couched in universal terms. His last message to His followers lays on them the obligation of winning the world to Him. This being so, no true disciple can escape a necessary relation to Christ's great campaign for the conquest of the world.

As a citizen in the Kingdom he is committed to it. He cannot enjoy the advantages of citizenship without assuming its obligations too. Wherever the interest of the King lies, there must lie also the interest of every subject. Of the last dark corner of any land where men are sinning and suffering, every Christian should say, "My immediate personal concern is out where those men live." Every human being who is a potential subject of the great Kingdom has a right to know the gospel of the Kingdom and the terms of citizenship in it.

If Christ is cosmopolitan in His love

for all men it is not permitted to any subject of His to be provincial. He must have that mind and that heart in him which were also in Christ Jesus. He must be interested in the world-wide enterprise of missions because that is the dearest interest of Jesus Christ.

If he is interested, he will want to be informed, and so he will be ready to read and study missions. A man may not claim to have an interest in industrial questions unless he is a student of industrial questions; no more can he claim to be interested in missions if he is not a student of missions. Indeed, his interest, if it is not intelligent, is certain to be weak and vague and short-lived. To be deep and definite and abiding it must be well informed. He must study missions.

2. He should equip himself to lead in the missionary activities of the Church.

His allegiance to any church binds him to assume responsibility for a share in the propagation of the Gospel by that church. Whether or not he gives up his life to home or foreign missions, he cannot escape Christ's claim on him for his help in the campaign. Under Christ's law of conscription for this holy war no one is exempt from serv-

ice. Furthermore, necessity is laid upon every disciple to prepare himself to take *the most useful part possible* in the operations of missions. He would be a recreant if out of indolence he were to refuse any position of activity or of leadership in the enterprise.

The Church of to-day is calling for missionary leaders, especially from the ranks of college graduates. Never from the days of the early Christians has there been such an eagerness on the part of the Church to push forward the missionary cause. The Student Volunteer Movement, The Young People's Missionary Movement, the Central Committee of Women's Boards for the United Study of Missions and the Laymen's Missionary Movement are evidences of this interest. But leaders are wanted for this new campaign, and the Church is looking expectantly to the Christian men and women who each year come from the colleges and enter into the fellowship and service of the congregations where they are to reside. With what eagerness ought Christian students, while at college, to prepare themselves by a study of missions for these splendid opportunities that await them!

Probably the most remarkable manifestation of this new interest is in the direction of the study of missions. By new organizations, new methods and new literature, a knowledge of missions is being diffused through the Church. One of the largest and most promising positions of service which the Church has to offer is that of leadership in this mission study movement. The Church rightly assumes that for such important positions the men and women coming from the higher institutions of learning are peculiarly fitted. And, appropriately enough, there are opportunities in college to-day as never before for special preparation for mission study leadership. If impelled by no other reason than that of a loyal desire to serve the Church to the largest advantage, the college man or woman should study missions and, if possible, have a share in the mission study activities of the institution.

Stupendous changes are taking place at the present time in most mission countries, notably in those of the Orient. Processes of reconstruction are at work. A new national consciousness is being aroused, educational and social ideals are being revolutionized and re-

spect for the old faiths is dying. New nations are being made. These mighty changes are a challenge to the Church to push forward her forces to a full occupancy of these lands at once. This implies that they are a challenge to individual Christians to inform themselves as thoroughly as possible in regard to these changing conditions, and thus prepare themselves for a more intelligent and active participation in the missionary enterprise. Incidentally these momentous developments which are taking place render the study of missions one of thrilling and up-to-date interest.

3. He should avail himself of the immense spiritual advantages which this study brings him.

In common with every other useful activity, the study of missions brings a reflex gain which alone far outvalues the effort it demands. As before the mind of the Christian there rise up the lives and needs of far-distant people, his heart is warmed, his vision is expanded and a divine compassion takes hold of his life for the sheep that are without a shepherd. As he realizes how marvelously these needs have been met by the Gospel, he appreciates as never



before its universal appeal and its dynamic power. He gains a new sense of the world-wide imperialism of Christianity. As he considers the marvelous achievements of the omnipotent Lord of lords through the missionary enterprise, in saving the most ignorant and debased men, in elevating depressed and savage races, in transforming national tendencies and ideals, in moving among the nations, bringing everywhere light, peace, purity and love,—his pulses throb with a new affection for his divine Friend, his heart leaps with new devotion and allegiance to his Saviour, the all-conquering, all-loving Saviour of the world. He cannot read the story of these triumphs of the cross without having his faith strengthened in the wonder-working, all-availing might of his Lord—availing both for all his own personal concerns and for the spiritual conquest of the world. His eye pierces the years lying before him, and with a buoyant optimism he sees the enlightenment and the salvation of all the needy, suffering, struggling nations of the earth.

It is of great value to his prayer-life that the Christian should study missions. For, as thenceforth he enters

the place of prayer with intercessions on his lips for the help and salvation of the world, he is prepared to offer his prayers intelligently. It is one thing to merely repeat the prayer "Thy Kingdom come," while still in ignorance of the Kingdom's affairs throughout the earth; and it is quite another thing for the student of missions to put detail and eager intensity into the prayers which the Lord has commanded him to offer, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven; Lord, send forth laborers into the harvest; for Thine is the Kingdom." A full obedience to these prayer instructions calls for the study of missions.

Another distinct gain that comes to the Christian student as he studies missions is that he thus gains data on which to base his decision as to his life's investment. There are numbers of Christian students who are making the unreasonable presumption that because they have been born in this country God must have designed that they should spend all their lives here. If there is any presumption in the matter at all it is that God wishes their lives to be spent where the need of them is greatest, and that is not here. But how

are they to know? Many a Christian student is asking God to reveal to him His will on this tremendously solemn question, who has not taken pains to provide himself with a basis for just and conclusive thinking. It is not reasonable to expect some remarkable, supernatural communication as to the will of God. He commonly reveals His will through the ordinary channels of our own reasonable judgment and intelligence. But before reason and judgment can do their part in leading to the right decision, we must have intelligence. We must know the facts. The Christian student is the judge, and he cannot, in fairness, pronounce judgment in the case until he has heard the evidence from the foreign mission field as well as the evidence from his own country. And therefore he must study missions. For the unfair student who is willing to decide the case before the evidence is all in, or for the selfish student who is unwilling to offer his life to the work of the Kingdom of God in certain places or surroundings, this argument will be without value. But to the student who is eager to find the will of God and to do it, the obligation to study missions will be clear and commanding.